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FEDERAL AGENCIES JOIN EFFORTS AGAINST SALMONELLA

WASHINGTON, May 21—An expanded program to protect consumers from salmonella in grade-A shell eggs was announced today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the Food and Drug Administration.

In 1986, the Centers for Disease Control determined that Grade-A shell eggs—the kind most commonly sold in cartons in grocery stores—were a significant source of Salmonella enteritidis (SE), one variety of the bacterium.

The program will focus on increased testing of more poultry facilities, expanded tracking of suspect eggs, consumer education on safe egg storage, handling and cooking, and joint research projects.

"This inter-agency agreement culminates more than a year of intense discussions," said Jo Ann Smith, USDA's assistant secretary for marketing and inspection services. "We believe a joint program will result in greater efficiency."

"The joint program will not eradicate the bacteria or eliminate all risk of disease, but it will help us deal more effectively with the problem and minimize the risk to public health," said FDA Commissioner David A. Kessler, M.D.

In addition to the joint research and consumer eduction projects, the program steps up and continues mandatory testing of breeder flocks under USDA's National Poultry Improvement Plan.

Based on FDA's Model Code Interpretation program, recommendations for proper egg handling will be given to state and local food regulatory agencies and restaurant managers, retail markets and institutions.

Salmonellosis results from consumption of food—most often of animal origin—that contains Salmonella bacteria. Symptoms include abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhea and vomiting. While in most healthy people the infection diminishes without long-term effects, in the elderly, young and those with weak immune systems, symptoms can be life-threatening.

Since the 1986 CDC determination on Grade-A shell eggs, APHIS and FDA have each developed programs based on their different authorities and responsibilities to look into the problem and control its spread.

The APHIS program traces the source of egg-related human outbreaks of SE; tests the source flock and works to eliminate infection; and enforces regulations on pasteurizing eggs from infected flocks and prohibiting interstate movement of infected birds. The FDA program provides guidance to retail food establishments, informs the public on how to avoid illness and assists efforts of other govenment agencies.

The inter-agency agreement also pledged support to a pilot Salmonella enteritidis control program on the state level.

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U.S. DONATES SORGHUM TO ERITREA

WASHINGTON, May 21—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will donate 15,000 metric tons of U.S. sorghum to Eritrea through Catholic Relief Services, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman announced today.

In addition to the $1.4 million sorghum donation, the United States will pay transportation, storage and handling costs.

"This donation will provide emergency subsistence rations to about 770,000 of the most severely at-risk people in Eritrea," Veneman said. "It will ease the impact of food shortages by improving overall food supplies in the targeted regions."

As a result of a poor output of cereals and pulses (edible seeds of legumes such as peas, beans and lentils) in 1991, the food supply situation continues to be grave in Eritrea and large imports of food are required. Although famine has largely been averted, widespread malnutrition is prevalent.

The sorghum will be distributed free of charge by local relief organizations which will work with Catholic Relief Services. Much of the sorghum will be channeled through food-for-work initiatives which include soil conservation, water catchment dams, hand dug wells and water supply systems.

The donation was made under Section 416(b) of the Agricultural Act of 1949, which authorizes the donation of surplus commodities owned by USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation to needy people overseas.

For more information, contact James F. Keefer, USDA'S Foreign Agricultural Service, (202) 720-5263.

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USDA ANNOUNCES 1992-CROP CORN AND SORGHUM COUNTY LOAN AND PURCHASE RATES

WASHINGTON, May 21—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation today announced county loan and purchase rates for the 1992 crops of corn and sorghum.

The 1992-crop price support rates were determined in accordance with the Agricultural Act of 1949 and reflect changes in the national average price support rates. Some county rates were adjusted to reflect location and transportation costs. These adjustments were limited to a three percent change in addition to the change in the national average price support levels from the 1991-crop price support levels.

Copies of the rate schedules are available from: Tom Fink, Cotton, Grain and Rice Price Support Division, USDA/ASCS, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013; telephone (202) 720-8701.

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USDA RELAXES FOOD STAMP RULES FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY

WASHINGTON, May 21—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today relaxed key eligibility rules on food stamps to help speed supplemental assistance and reach more victims of civil unrest in Los Angeles County.

The easing of rules would mean a one-time only issuance of food stamp benefits for victims who otherwise couldn't qualify under certain assets tests. This also applies to aliens in the amnesty program, a USDA official said.

The modified program, to be administered by Los Angeles County, will be available Tuesday, May 26.

"The food stamp program is working, however there are some people who need benefits but have not been able to qualify for them," said

Sharon Levinson, regional administrator of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service in San Francisco.

Today's action is based on an analysis of conditions by federal, state and local authorities to identify problems. These steps address the problems, Levinson said.

"We are relaxing the rules to ease the suffering and help victims in affected areas get back on their feet and rebuild their lives," she said.

To help victims qualify for the food stamp benefits, USDA said it would:

—drop the "vehicle value test" for riot victims in Los Angeles County if they can verify that they suffered disaster-related expenses or a loss of income from jobs. This means vehicles will not be counted as an asset in determining eligibility for food stamp assistance. The current vehicle cap, or ceiling, is $4,500.

—waive rules to qualify as eligible those persons who are enrolled in the amnesty program under the 1988 Immigration Reform and Control Act. The same verification rules apply.

In addition, beneficiaries of the regular food stamp program who seek to replace lost or destroyed food due to electrical outages during the riots will have 10 business days, starting Tuesday, May 26, to apply for food stamp benefits. They will receive the equivalent of a month of benefits.

USDA has agreed to provide an additional $2 million in commodities for distribution to Los Angeles County food banks and soup kitchens. This includes such items as infant formula and cereal, non-fat dry milk and rice and beans, canned pork, tomatoes, sweet potatoes and apple sauce.

USDA acted earlier to provide supplemental food stamp allotments to beneficiaries who have suffered a loss of earned income. In addition, it has provided foodstuffs to foodbanks in Los Angeles, including 27,000 boxes of cereal, 58,000 cans of infant formula and more than 1,500 six-pound boxes of non-fat dry milk.

Nutrition programs for the elderly are operating at 106 sites, in addition to continuing school lunch and breakfast programs at nearly 1,800 schools in the county. More than 150,000 families are being fed through 650 food bank distribution sites, 350 of them in the affected areas of the county.

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SEX DRIVE AND FUNGI FOIL A MICRO-PEST OF SOYBEAN

WASHINGTON, May 22—Fungi and sexual trickery kept root-destroying soybean cyst nematodes from showing up for dinner in a new control scheme being patented by researchers at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"Compounds that mimic the female nematode's sex attractant, or pheromone, confuse the male so he can't find a female. And if they do mate, the fungus destroys many of the eggs," said plant pathologist Susan L. F. Meyer with USDA's Agricultural Research Service in Beltsville, Md. As a result of this double play strategy, she said, there were 86 percent fewer pests in some outdoor test plots last summer.

The lethal combination was a lab-altered strain of the fungus Verticillium lecanii, common in soil, and a pheromone-like compound, syringic acid.

The fungi and pheromone compounds were released from pellets placed in soil with soybean seed, said Meyer, with the ARS Nematology Laboratory. The nematodes, known as Heterodera glycines, are transparent, microscopic worms. Immature nematodes latch onto roots and drain plant nutrients. In yield loss, the pests cost growers in 27 states an estimated $250 million in 1991.

Next week, ARS scientists will begin larger tests in Delaware and Maryland. The tests are part of a cooperative research and development a agreement with Crop Genetics International, a firm in Hanover, Md.

"The benefit, 5 to 10 years from now, could be new, safer alternatives to conventional pesticides for the soybean cyst nematode," Meyer said in the May Agricultural Research magazine. A farmer might use the fungus or pheromone alone, as well as combine them, she added.

Conventional chemicals for controlling H. glycines and other parasitic nematodes in crops can be expensive, and some chemicals have been taken off the market because of concern over groundwater pollution, Meyer noted. She said the new approach also may work with other nematodes that are parasites of field and orchard crops.

In crop losses and chemical controls, soybean cyst and other plant-parasitic nematodes run up an annual price tag estimated at $5.8 billion in the U.S. and $77.7 billion worldwide, Meyer said.

After immature nematodes emerge from eggs, they seek out roots and feed until they mature. Mature males leave the roots to seek a mate, drawn by the female's pheromone. After coiling and uncoiling around a

female's lemonshaped body sac in a dancelike mating rite, a male deposits sperm and soon dies.

Robin L. Huettel and Howard Jaffee, two former ARS scientists, identified the nematode pheromone as vanillic acid in 1989 after six years of studies. Albert B. DeMilo, a chemist with Beltsville's Insect Cheical Ecology Laboratory, supplied the syringic acid compound and other pheromone cousins used in last year's tests.

The female nematode lays about 300 to 500 eggs inside the sac and within a gelatinous mass just outside it. She dies shortly thereafter, and her body becomes a cyst—a protective chamber for the eggs.

For destroying the eggs, Meyer noted, the natural V. lecanii fungus was "not very effective when applied at rates we consider practical for commercial uses." But exposing fungus colonies to ultraviolet light and a fungicide, benomyl, triggered genetic changes that increased the effectiveness of some strains.

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AUSTRALIAN CITRUS FRUIT PERMITTED U.S. ENTRY

WASHINGTON, May 26—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced that oranges, lemons, limes, mandarins and grapefruit from the Riverland district of Australia can be imported into the United States.

"Citrus from Australia has been prohibited from the United States because of the presence of the Mediterranean fruit fly and the Queensland fruit fly in that country," said B. Glen Lee, deputy administrator for plant protection and quarantine in USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "The South Australian Department of Agriculture has maintained an eradication and monitoring program since 1985, and APHIS has determined the Riverland district is now free of these injurious pests."

Riverland citrus can be imported without undergoing treatment for fruit flies. Should a fruit fly infestation occur, citrus could be imported from the district if subjected to an APHIS-authorized cold storage treatment.

Australian importers have indicated navel oranges are the only commodity they will export to the United States on a regular basis. The Australian navel oranges will enter U.S. markets from June through August, providing U.S. consumers an additional source of this fruit when

fresh domestic navel oranges are unavailable, Lee said.

The revised regulations were published as a proposal in the Feb. 3 Federal Register, and written comments were accepted until March 4. To ensure the regulations were in place in time for the fruit's summer shipping season, this rule was effective May 22 and will be published in the May 28 Federal Register.

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MADIGAN NAMES ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EMERGING DEMOCRACIES

WASHINGTON, May 26—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan, has named 19 private sector representatives to two-year terms on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Advisory Committee on Emerging Democracies.

The committee will provide information and advice that will help USDA develop strategies to enhance market development and to share U.S. agricultural expertise. The program is targeted to countries that are developing market economies and carrying out democratic reform, including many in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and the Western Hemisphere.

The committee will also advise on ways to increase U.S. private sector involvement in cooperative work in these emerging democracies.

"This committee represents the views and experience of a cross section of the U.S. food and agribusiness sectors," said Madigan.

The committee is authorized by a section of the 1990 Farm Bill, "Promotion of Agricultural Exports to Emerging Democracies."

Named to the committee are: Burgee Amdahl, former chief executive officer, Farmer Credit Banks of St. Paul, Minn., Hudson, Wis.; David Bechtol, president, American Society of Agricultural Consultants, Canyon, Texas; Garrett Boyd, Head of Service, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, McLean, Va.; Russell Bragg, former group vice president, Grain Merchandising Div., Pillsbury, Minneapolis, Minn.; Howard Gochberg, retired, Land O'Lakes, White Bear Lake, Minn.; Fernando Gumucio, retired chairman and CEO, Del Monte USA, Lafayette, Calif.; Jack D. Helton, staff vice president, Government Marketing, Sea Land Service, Inc., Washington, D.C.; Alan Kimbell,

president, Fruit Technologies, Ltd., and Sassacorp, Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.; Mark Kuechler, division manager, Southland Corporation, Falmouth, Va.; Chester McCorkle, professor emeritus, Department of Agricultural Economics, and former dean, College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, University of California-Davis, Davis, Calif.;

Also Robert Moore, president, International Banana Association, Washington, D.C.; Robert B. Moss, chairman, American Fine Foods, Inc., Payette, Idaho; Edward Moyers, chairman and CEO, Central Illinois Railroad Company, Chicago, Ill.; Alec Poitevint, II, president and chairman, Southeastern Mineral Inc., Bainbridge, Ga.; Gary Ray, vice president, Operations Group, George A. Hormel & Company, Austin, Minn.; Winthrop P. Rockefeller, chairman, Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development and Winrock Farms, Little Rock, Ark.; Carol Scroggins, president, The Consumer Voice, Inc., Oklahoma City, Okla.; Eric Thor, director and professor, School of Agribusiness and Environmental Resources, Arizona State University, Tempe, Ariz.; and Bonnie Heineman Wolfe, New Venture Development Corporation, Indianapolis, Ind.

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USDA ANNOUNCES PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF 1992 PROGRAM SIGNUP

WASHINGTON, May 27—The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today that producers have signed contracts to enroll 165.5 million acres of feed grains, wheat, upland and extra-long staple (ELS) cotton, and rice in the 1992 commodity acreage reduction programs.

Under the contracts 8.6 million acres will be designated as Acreage Conservation Reserve. Also, 9.7 million acres are intended to be idled under the 0/92 and 50/92 provisions; 0.7 million acres are intended to be planted to minor oilseeds under the 0/92 provision; and about 6,750 acres of sesame and crambe are intended to be planted under the 0/92 and 50/92 provisions.

The acreage enrolled in 1992 commodity programs represents 77.9 percent of the 212.5 million acres of total crop acreage bases established for these commodities. For the 1991 programs, 79.3 percent of total crop

acreage bases was enrolled with 28.8 million acres devoted to conserving uses, compared with 18.3 million this year.

NATIONAL SUMMARY OF THE 1992 ENROLLMENT REPORT

						0,50/92			
	Effective Base	Enrolled Base	Percent Enrolled[1]	ACR	Idled	Planted to Minor Oil-seeds	Crambe and Sesame	Total[2]	Net Flexed Acres
Crop	*-mil. acres-*		*-%-*		*---------million acres---------*				
Corn	82.2	61.9	75.4	3.1	2.0	0.1	*	2.2	-2.2
Sorghum	13.6	10.5	77.4	0.5	1.4	*	*	1.4	-0.3
Barley	11.1	8.3	74.4	0.4	1.6	0.2	*	1.7	-0.6
Oats	7.3	2.9	40.4	0.0	0.6	0.1	*	0.7	-0.3
Feed Gr.	114.2	83.7	73.3	4.0	5.5	0.4	*	6.0	-3.4
Wheat	79.0	65.0	82.2	3.2	3.5	0.3	*	3.8	-2.4
Up. Cotton	14.9	12.9	86.5	1.3	0.3	n/a	*	0.3	0.1
ELS Cotton	0.3	0.1	54.1	*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Rice	4.1	3.9	93.0	0.0	0.4	n/a	*	0.4	-0.3
Total	212.5	165.5	77.9	8.6	9.7	0.7	*	10.4	-6.0

NOTE: Totals may not add due to rounding.
*Less than 50,000 acres.
[1]Acreage Conservation Reserve.
[2]Normal flex acreage and optional flex acreage planted to another crop.

Producers who participate in the 1992 commodity programs agreed to reduce their plantings from the established crop acreage bases by at least 10 percent for upland cotton; and 5 percent for wheat, corn, sorghum, barley, and ELS cotton. Acreage reductions were not required for rice and oats.

Producers have the option to plant permitted crops other than the program crop on up to 25 percent of any participating program crop acreage base without having a reduction in the size of the base. This acreage is known as "flex" acreage. The first 15 percent of the flex acreage is called "normal flex acreage" (NFA) and the other 10 percent is called "optional flex acreage" (OFA).

Producers have stated they intend to plant 4.6 million acres of "flex"

acreage to soybeans, 0.4 million to minor oilseeds and 0.9 million acres to other non-program crops. These intentions are not binding upon producers.

NATIONAL SUMMARY OF 1992 FLEXIBLE ACREAGE

Crop	Soybeans	Minor Oilseeds	Other Non-program Crops	Total
		million acres		
Corn	2.252	0.061	0.169	2.482
Sorghum	0.270	0.023	0.061	0.354
Barley	0.133	0.042	0.101	0.276
Oats	0.085	0.015	0.031	0.131
Feed Grains	2.740	0.141	0.362	3.243
Wheat	1.444	0.204	0.506	2.154
Upland Cotton	0.176	0.015	0.026	0.217
Rice	0.257	0.027	0.029	0.313
Total	4.618	0.387	0.923	5.928

NOTE: Totals may not add due to rounding.

Participating producers are eligible for program benefits such as price support loans and deficiency payments. Also, producers had the option of requesting that 40 percent of their projected deficiency payments be paid in advance for the 1992 crops of wheat, feed grains and upland cotton; no advance deficiency payments were made available for the 1992 crop of ELS cotton. All payments were made in cash.

Signup for the 1992 programs began on February 10 and ended on May 1.

For a complete copy of the tables that show enrollment and "flex" data by commodity and state can be obtained by retrieving press release number 0503-92.

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WATER OUTLOOK STILL DIM FOR MOST OF WEST

WASHINGTON, May 27—Water supply conditions remain lower than normal in many Western states, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service.

"Spring runoff began earlier than usual this year as April temperatures melted the already low snowpacks found in most of the western states," said SCS Chief William Richards. "It appears that most of the West will be faced with below-to well-below average streamflows. Only the southernmost and northermost areas of the West are likely to receive average or above-average streamflows."

Areas expected to produce near-average to well-above average runoff are in New Mexico, southern Colorado, the southeastern corner of Utah, the northern portion of the Columbia River Basin in British Columbia, and southeastern Alaska.

Near record low streamflow volumes are expected in the northern portion of the Great Basin, the southern portion of the Columbia River Basin, and the Green River tributaries of the Colorado River Basin.

Reservoir storage remains below-average for most western states. Storage in Nevada reservoirs remains the region's lowest. Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Washington are the only states reporting above-average reservoir storage.

Western states depend on snowmelt for about 75 percent of their water supply. SCS and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service jointly analyze snow and precipitation data to forecast seasonal runoff in the West.

The state-by-state outlook:

ALASKA—April precipitation was below-average for most of Alaska. Notable exceptions included the Copper and Tanana river basins where precipitation totals were three to four times the monthly average. Below-average temperatures in the interior during April delayed the onset of the spring ice break-up in the northern half of the state. In the south, relatively warm temperatures combined with the moisture shortfall to eliminate most low elevation snowpacks.

CALIFORNIA—The water year runoff is expected to be about 50 percent of average, similar to last year. This is the sixth consecutive year of much-below average runoff. Seasonal precipitation since Oct. 1 is about 85 percent of average statewide. The central valleys and the central and southern coastal areas received above-average precipitation. Reservoir

storage throughout California is about 72 percent of average. This is somewhat higher than last year.

Because of the warm spring, most of the snowpack has already melted and mountain stream runoff should recede rapidly. As a result, the current reservoir storage advantage is likely to fade during the next two months to levels similar to last year.

COLORADO—Springlike weather arrived early to the Colorado mountains this year. During April, there was a lack of any significant snow storms and warmer than normal temperatures. Streamflows are expected to peak somewhat earlier than normal, with overall runoff volumes reduced from last month. Above average precipitation will be needed to extend this summer's water supply by supplementing irrigation requirements and reducing demands.

IDAHO—Precipitation in April did little to improve the water supply outlook for the coming summer. Above normal temperatures during late April and early May caused snowmelt rates to soar and runoff to begin three to four weeks earlier than normal. Streamflow forecasts for many streams in southern Idaho are near record lows. The combination of extremely low streamflows and very low reservoirs will lead to severe agricultural water shortages this summer across much of southern and central Idaho. The 1992 water year may replace 1977 as the low water supply year across much of the state.

MONTANA—Mountain precipitation during April ranged from below-average in northwestern Montana to well-above average in the central and southcentral portions of the state. Cumulative precipitation since Oct. 1 is 75 to 85 percent of average throughout most mountainous areas of the state. Streamflows for the remainder of the spring and summer are forecast to be below-to well-below average with some basins having near record low forecasts.

NEVADA—Water supply conditions for the Great Basin of Nevada and California remain well-below average and severe drought conditions continue for the northern half of Nevada. It appears this water year will be the most severe of the six years of drought, and new record low streamflows are likely to occur. Surface water demands for irrigation will not be fully met and extreme shortages will occur throughout northern Nevada. Irrigators who depend on surface water will need to supplement crops from ground water, if available, and be in close contact with their irrigation districts.

NEW MEXICO—Snowpack conditions in New Mexico declined during the last month. No significant snowfall was recorded during April. Most snow below 10,000-foot elevation has melted. Near-average to much-above average runoff is expected throughout New Mexico this spring and summer.

OREGON—Extreme drought conditions can be expected in eastern Oregon this summer. The only snow remaining is in the very high elevations of the Cascade and Wallowa Mountains, and that snow is less than 25 percent of average. Above normal precipitation was received during April in many places throughout Oregon, but the water year total precipitation is still very low. Irrigation reservoir storage is only 49 percent of average throughout the state. Streamflow forecasts in eastern Oregon are extremely low with many close to the lowest on record. West of the Cascades, forecasts are still much below-average.

UTAH—Water supply conditions over much of Utah are the lowest in recent years. April weather was hot and dry which virtually evaporated what little snowpack existed. Streamflows have peaked in many areas of the state with April flows ranging 30 to 140 percent of average. There is no snow left to fuel the normal peak flow months of May and June which will leave many areas with much-below average streamflow, possibly as low as in 1977.

WASHINGTON—April precipitation was 149 percent of normal statewide. It varied from 32 percent of average in the Okanogan Basin to 192 percent in the Olympic Basin. Forecasts for 1992 runoff vary from 87 percent of average for the Skagit River to 29 percent for the Grande Ronde River in the Walla Walla Basin. April streamflows varied from 35 percent of normal on the Walla Walla River near Milton Freewater, Ore., to 185 percent on the Smilkameen River. May 1 reservoir storage is generally good, with reservoirs in the Yakima Basin at 117 percent of average and 87 percent of capacity.

WYOMING—Streamflow production will be much-below average during the spring and summer over most of the state. High mountain snowpacks are melting at a rapid rate as the melt season started nearly five weeks ahead of schedule. April precipitation for the most part was much-below average. Only the Bighorn Basin, the Snake River Drainage and Yellowstone National Park had normal or above-normal precipitation.

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